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SMOKE BATTLE

The U.S. Public Health Service has touched off another battle on the cancer causing properties of cigarettes. One offshoot of the controversy caused by publication of an article by Surgeon General Burney is further discussion of the cancer causing properties of urban air. Dr. Little of the Tobacco Industry Research Committee points to the dangers from inhalation of polluted urban air and says this may be the factor in the increasing rate of lung cancer.

Since the big fuss over the supposed-to-be cancer causing cranberries, much more has been said about the matter of smoking and the growth of lung cancer. Not much new has been added, except in the article by Dr. Burney in which he referred to some new experiments tending to support the lies that smoking of cigarettes brings on lung cancer. Positive proof is yet lacking as to the link between smoking and cancer.

As of now, Americans are enjoying the greatest longevity in the history of the country, and possibly in the world. We are doing so in spite of the hazards of cranberries, cigarettes, polluted urban air, etc. Medical science is making it possible for us to live longer, healthier lives. So there is not likely to be much more worry on the part of smokers over the latest cancer talk than there has been in the past. The habit of smoking is a persistent one. It'll take more direct evidence than is now available to make much of a dent in the use of tobacco.

STATE TIMES
Baton Rouge, Louisiana
December 3, 1959

HERALD BANNER
Greenville, Texas
December 1, 1959

Officially Recognized

Surgeon General Leroy E. Burney of the U. S. Public Health Service wrote a piece for the November 28 number of the Journal of the American Medical Association saying "the weight of evidence" implicates cigaret smoking as the main cause of lung cancer.

He said scientific research has pointed to air pollution—principally smog and auto exhaust fumes—as a probable, though lesser, cause of lung cancer. Filter tips so far developed, he went on, do not do a good enough job of straining tars suspected as cancer producers.

Director of the Tobacco Industry Research Committee, Dr. C. C. Little of New York, commented that most of the points in General Burney's article were not new. Dr. Little said they were "first advanced some years ago in statistical studies that admittedly are not supported by experimental evidence."

But aside from any agreement or disagreement with the surgeon general's pronouncement, it does lend the color of official and authoritative approval to the claim that cigaret smoking is the "main" factor in lung cancer. At that, it merely sets the stage for a big argument between the anti-cigaret people and the pollution theorists as to which is worse.

As a layman with no pretense of medical knowledge, the writer would think that, first of all, it would be a good idea to find out whether and how much the diagnosis of lung cancer has changed in the last few years. Is more of it being found because modern diagnosis has pinned down a disease that might have been diagnosed as something else for generations? How many heart victims were buried as victims of acute indigestion or apoplexy before diagnostic procedures were improved?

In any case, cigaret consumption—no pun intended—has gone up by leaps and bounds since the lung-cancer theory was sprung on the public. That carries its own commentary.

TIMES
Toledo, Ohio
November 30, 1959

More Of The Same?

IT IS TO be suspected that the Government's strongest statement to date linking smoking and cancer is a long, long way from the final word on the subject.

Recognition of this probability is hinted in the almost apologetic explanation by Surgeon General Burney that by law the Public Health Service must tell the medical profession and the public about anything affecting public health. The gist of his warning was that the weight of evidence implicates smoking as the main cause of the rising rate of lung cancer. He said it was based partly on new evidence. One set of eyebrows lifted immediately.

In his denial, Dr. C. C. Little, scientific director of the tobacco industry research committee, said the warning was a warmed over rehash of old statistics "admittedly not supported by experimental evidence."

Human nature being what it is, it also is to be suspected that the warning will gain nothing in influence by treading so closely on the heels of the cranberry furor.

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